RESOLUTION 3-2014
Regular Annual Session
Submitted by
AVMA Executive Board

REVISED POLICY ON PREGNANT SOW HOUSING

RESOLVED, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) adopt the revised policy on Pregnant Sow Housing as noted below (additions are underlined, deletions are struckthrough).

Pregnant Sow Housing
Pregnant sows are kept in a variety of housing systems. Sow housing and management systems should:

- Provide every animal access to appropriate food and water;
- Promote good air quality and allow proper sanitation;
- Protect sows from environmental extremes;
- Reduce exposure to hazards or conditions that result in injuries, pain, distress, fear or disease;
- Facilitate the observation of individual sows to assess their welfare;
- Provide sows with adequate quality and quantity of space that allows sows to assume normal postures and express normal patterns of behavior.

There are advantages and disadvantages to any sow housing system and the benefits and harms to the animals of each should be considered by weighing scientific evidence and veterinary professional judgment. For example, while appropriate training is required for any management system to accommodate the welfare of the sow. Gestation stall systems may minimize aggression and injury, reduce competition, and allow individual feeding and nutritional management, assisting in control of body condition. Stall systems restrict normal behavioral expression. Group housing systems are less restrictive, but could lead to increased lameness and undesirable social behaviors such as aggression and competition for resources (e.g., feed, water, space to lie down), that could be detrimental to individual sows. Genetics and breed selection could promote good sow welfare by matching animals to the appropriate housing system. To address animal welfare in the long term, advantages of current housing systems should be retained while making improvements in design to overcome problems identified.

The AVMA encourages ongoing research to better understand and meet the welfare needs of gestating sows. Appropriate and ongoing training for people handling and working with pregnant sows is critical to ensure that they are able to provide and promote good welfare within the management system being used into housing systems for pregnant sows that improve their welfare.

Statement about the Resolution

The original policy on Pregnant Sow Housing was submitted via resolution and approved by the House of Delegates in 2002. That policy was superseded by a more detailed policy recommended by the Task Force on the Housing of Pregnant Sows and approved by the Executive Board in 2005, after the Task Force completed its literature review: A comprehensive review of housing for pregnant sows. In 2011 the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) recommended, and the Executive Board approved, a streamlined version of the 2005 policy.

During its fall 2012 and spring 2013 meetings, the AWC discussed recent decisions of pork processors, distributors and retailers, and actions taken by state and international governments...
and agencies, regarding the use of stalls for gestation housing and corresponding requests for information and comment from the AVMA. During Committee discussions it was noted the review completed by the Task Force was now 8 years old and staff was asked to complete a literature review that would update the Task Force report.

During its fall 2013 meeting, the AWC approved a motion to re-open the policy on Pregnant Sow Housing for review and possible revision ahead of the at-least-every-five-year review requirement. A topical subcommittee, with the AASV representative as lead, was appointed and charged with making its recommendations during the AWC’s spring 2014 meeting. The literature review was provided to the topical subcommittee as per the AWC’s request.

During the AWC’s March 2014 meeting, the topical subcommittee suggested, and the full AWC discussed and approved for Executive Board consideration, revisions to the policy on Pregnant Sow Housing as per this resolution. The AWC believes the suggested revisions are supported by current science and practical experience with housing systems, and that their approach to review of the policy was consistent with the overarching AVMA Animal Welfare Principles. The Executive Board recommends approval of the revised policy.

Financial Impact:  None

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